

**June 15, 2023**

## **Utility-Scale Solar Energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**

### **Update Newsletter**

Since December 2022, the Bureau of Land Management has been preparing a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will consider and analyze the environmental effects of updates to the 2012 Western Solar Plan. These updates are intended to continue the BLM's efforts to make appropriate lands available for solar energy development across eleven Western States, in support of the Biden-Harris administration's goals of permitting 25 gigawatts of renewable energy on public lands by 2025 and transitioning to a carbon-free power sector by 2035.

The BLM is releasing preliminary alternatives for this updated planning process. This step is intended to provide the public time to consider the emerging alternatives before a draft environmental impact statement is released. Though we are not inviting public comments at this stage of the process, there will be opportunity for full public review and comment on the range of alternatives and analysis of the effects of each presented in detail in the Draft Programmatic EIS, when it is published later this year.

The area for this utility-scale solar energy planning effort will be expanded from the 2012 Western Solar Plan to cover 11 western states: Arizona, California (exclusive of the area covered by the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)), Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. Under this updated planning effort, the BLM anticipates identifying areas open for solar energy development, lands excluded from solar energy development, and lands that may be available for development through a variance process.

The BLM is preparing this Programmatic EIS in response to Presidential Executive Orders and the Energy Act of 2020 and because the Western Solar Plan is over a decade old. The BLM is committed to responsible solar energy development on public land that balances the need for clean energy with thoughtful protection of natural and cultural resources and other uses, which is why it is undertaking this planning update.

A conceptual summary of preliminary alternatives [ [https://eplanning.blm.gov/public\\_projects/2022371/200538533/20080676/250086858/Preliminary%20Alternatives%20Matrix.pdf](https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/2022371/200538533/20080676/250086858/Preliminary%20Alternatives%20Matrix.pdf) ] for the Utility-Scale Solar Energy Programmatic EIS shows the agency's work to this point in the process. Specific language for each alternative is still being developed in coordination with our cooperating agencies.

Questions may be directed to [solar@blm.gov](mailto:solar@blm.gov)

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**May 24, 2023**

**The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Renewable Energy Coordination Office Releases the Scoping Summary Report for the Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development on BLM-Administered Land Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**

The BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a *Programmatic EIS to Evaluate Utility-Scale Solar Energy Planning and Amend Resource Management Plans for Renewable Energy Development* (Programmatic EIS) in the *Federal Register* on December 8, 2022 (87 FR 75284). The BLM's public outreach efforts included publication of the NOI, distribution of news releases, and public scoping meetings (both in-person and virtual). Between January 12, 2023, and February 14, 2023, the BLM hosted 14 public scoping meetings: 3 virtual meetings and 11 in-person meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to inform the public about the project and to provide an opportunity for individuals to submit oral comments. The Public Scoping period ended on March 1, 2023.

Members of the public, organizations, and local, county, and state agencies had several ways to provide comments during the scoping period. Comments could be provided through the BLM National NEPA Register project webpage, orally at scoping meetings, by email to [solar@blm.gov](mailto:solar@blm.gov), and through individual letters and comments mailed to Solar Energy Programmatic EIS Scoping, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

The Solar PEIS Scoping Summary Report can be found at this link.

[https://eplanning.blm.gov/projects/2022371/200538533/20079263/250085445/Solar%20PEIS%20Scoping%20Summary%20Report May%202023 Final.pdf](https://eplanning.blm.gov/projects/2022371/200538533/20079263/250085445/Solar%20PEIS%20Scoping%20Summary%20Report%20May%202023%20Final.pdf)

The Public Scoping Comments can be found at this link:

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/projects/2022371/200538533/20078790/250084972/Solar%20PEIS%20Scoping%20Comments%2005-15-2023.pdf>



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# News Release

Washington D.C.

**Date:** February 28, 2023

**Contact:** [BLM\\_Press@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_Press@blm.gov)

## **The Bureau of Land Management Announces End to Public Comment Period for Utility-scale Solar Review**

*Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan to Remain Outside Scope of Current Review*

WASHINGTON — The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced that the public comment period for its solar programmatic environmental impact statement will close March 1, 2023.

On December 5, 2022, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced that the Bureau of Land Management would begin considering updates to its 2012 [Western Solar Plan](#) in six southwestern states—Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah—and is seeking comment regarding expanding its comprehensive solar planning to include five additional states: Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming.

In the [Notice of Intent](#) published in the *Federal Register* on December 8, 2022, the BLM announced the public scoping period for the programmatic environmental impact statement for utility-scale solar energy planning would remain open for public comment for 15 days after the last public scoping meeting. The last public scoping meeting was held February 14, 2023, and the comment period will close March 1, 2023.

The BLM held [three virtual and 12 in-person public scoping meetings](#) to solicit initial input on the programmatic environmental impact statement effort, including a virtual meeting focused on southern California and Nevada [added in response to substantial public interest](#) in those areas. The three virtual meetings drew more than 547 registered participants and 99 submitted public comments. BLM received 74 comments overall through the in-person meetings held in Phoenix, Arizona; Sacramento, California; Grand Junction, Colorado; Washington, DC; Boise, Idaho; Billings, Montana; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Reno, Nevada; Bend, Oregon; Salt Lake City, Utah; Spokane, Washington; and Cheyenne, Wyoming.

In the notice of intent, the BLM stated it would consider the extent to which lands covered by the [Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan](#) (DRECP) may be included in the planning area for the current solar programmatic environmental impact statement effort. After consideration, the BLM chose not to include the area under the DRECP in the current effort as the BLM continues to believe the DRECP supports an acceptable balance between conservation and renewable energy opportunities within its planning area boundary. Public comments received to date support this position.

In developing this programmatic environmental impact statement, the BLM will engage with cooperating agencies, consulting parties, and Tribes. Additionally, the public will have the opportunity to review and comment on the draft programmatic environmental impact statement, which is planned for release in summer 2023.

Please visit <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022371/570> to submit comments online or to view presentations, handouts and transcripts for each of the 15 public scoping meetings. Emailed comments should be sent to [solar@blm.gov](mailto:solar@blm.gov). Comments submitted by mail should be addressed to Solar Energy PEIS Scoping, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240, and postmarked by March 1, 2023.

— BLM —

*The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land located primarily in 12 western states, including Alaska, on behalf of the American people. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. Our mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*